

When a Christian Suffers Persecution - Part 5 - Acts 24:22-27 – February 21st, 2010

- This is part five of a series titled; "When a Christian Suffers Persecution," as we've studied how Paul is persecuted on trial for his faith.

1. Be courageous (Verse 1)

- Even though he's faced with a powerful prosecution against him, Paul is courageous because of the promise the Lord made to him.

2. Be genuine (Verses 2-4)

- Tertullus, the prosecuting attorney, makes his opening arguments and is as flattering as he is disingenuous towards the Governor Felix.

3. Be truthful (Verses 5-9)

- Absolutely nothing they say about Paul is true and in fact every charge against him is a blatant lie and false accusation based on rumor.

4. Be respectful (Verse 10)

- When Paul speaks to Felix, there is no flattery or insincerity however there is respect. Paul respects the office of governor, not the man.

5. Be prudent (Verses 11-13)

- Paul very prudently argues his case in how he presents the evidence as facts. He's as shrewd as a snake but harmless as a dove.

6. Be scriptural (Verses 14-16)

- Paul declares that he's a believer in the Hebrew scripture, a follower of Jesus and a preacher of Christ, Him crucified then resurrected.

7. Be benevolent (Verse 17)

- Paul tells Felix that his motive for coming to Jerusalem in the first place was to bring financial benevolence for the impoverished church.

8. Be confident (Verses 18-19)

- Paul displays tremendous confidence, not in himself, but in His Lord by telling Felix the prosecution has failed to produce any evidence.

9. Be bold (Verses 20-21)

- Paul displays a holy boldness in refuting the prosecution's case by staying on message with his belief in the irrefutable resurrection.

10. Be content (Verses 22-23)

22 Then Felix, who was well acquainted with the Way, adjourned the proceedings. "When Lysias the commander comes," he said, "I will decide your case." 23 He ordered the centurion to keep Paul under guard but to give him some freedom and permit his friends to take care of his needs.

- v22 We read that Felix who was well acquainted with Christianity, has the court adjourned so as to decide the case when Lysias comes.
- v23 Felix then orders the centurion to guard Paul, but gives him his freedom and permits his friends to take care of him and his needs.
- Clearly, the Governor believes that Paul is innocent of the crimes he's being falsely accused of. He believes Paul, not the prosecution.

- What's interesting is that Paul isn't objecting to a decision of non-decision. In other words, Paul seems content with an adjourned court.
- In all fairness, justice has not been served. Paul is innocent, and should have been given definite liberty, not just a deferred lenience.
- Yet, in the midst of this miscarriage of justice, Paul doesn't seem the least bit concerned with Governor Felix's cowardly indecision.

- Here's why; "Paul is drawing his water of contentment from a deep well of God's Word to him in spite of the unfair circumstances."
- Paul is content because he knows that everything is going according to God's plan for him in Caesarea and that he will still go to Rome.
- Paul knows that Felix and his wife Drusilla were both well acquainted with Christianity, and is content to have God use him in their lives.

- There's something else here that can easily be missed at first glance and it's in the detail of what Luke, by the Holy Spirit records for us.
- Notice that Governor Felix orders the centurion to guard Paul but give him some freedom to permit his friends to take care of him.
- The sad fact of the matter is that not one friend comes to visit him let alone to take care of him and his needs, yet Paul is still content.
- The reason the Apostle isn't discontent is because he's resting content in the Lord and not in his unkind friends or unjust circumstances.

Proverbs 19:23 The fear of the LORD leads to life: Then one rests content, untouched by trouble. NIV

11. Be honest (Verses 24-25)

24 Several days later Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was a Jewess. He sent for Paul and listened to him as he spoke about faith in Christ Jesus. 25 As Paul discoursed on righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and said, "That's enough for now! You may leave. When I find it convenient, I will send for you."

- v24 Within a week, Felix and his Jewess wife Drusilla, invite Paul over so they can listen to him speak about faith in Jesus Christ.
- v25 Paul talks to them about righteousness, self-control, and the coming judgment. Felix becomes fearful and has Paul leave.
- Felix tells Paul that he has had enough for now and when he finds a convenient time, he will once again send for Paul to come.

- The Apostle isn't pulling any punches here. The truth of the matter is; he's being brutally honest in what he says to Felix and Drusilla.
- His discourse has three main points, righteousness, self-control, and the coming judgment, all of which apply directly to this couple.
- Paul knows about these people and fearlessly tailors his discourse to speak directly to where they're at and the sin that they are in.

"This aged sinner had enticed Drusilla while a girl of about eighteen from her husband, and was living not only in open sin with her, but also in the commission of every other crime. Paul did well, therefore to preach to him concerning the judgment: the cowardly voluntary trembled, but continued in his sins."

Charles Spurgeon

- Dare I say; "we as Christians today are afraid to be honest with people when it comes to speaking to them about their sinful condition."

"But some men will say, 'Sir, ministers ought not to be personal.' Ministers ought to be personal, and they will never be true to their Master till they are . . . But now we poor craven sons of nobodies have to stand and talk about generalities; but we are afraid to point you out and tell you of your sins personally. But, blessed be God, from that fear I have been delivered long ago. There walketh not a man on the surface of this earth whom I dare not reprove." Charles Spurgeon

- If you were to ask me what I thought the reason is that we as Christians cower in confronting sin I would have to say it's the fear of man.
- Paul could have easily played to the man pleasing tendency in all of us hoping to find favor in Felix's eyes in order to gain his release.
- Paul isn't the least bit concerned with pleasing man, nor is he trapped by the fear of man. He fears God, and wants only to please God.

"Are there not some to be found, who think the highest object of the minister is to attract the multitude and then to please them? O my God! how solemnly ought each of us to bewail our sin, if we feel we have been guilty in this matter. What is it to have pleased men? Is there aught in it that can make our head lie easy on the pillow of our death? Is there aught in it that can give us boldness in the day of judgment when we face thy tribunal, O Judge of quick and dead? No, my brethren, we must always take our texts so that we may bear upon our hearers with all our might." Charles Spurgeon

- I find it interesting that even though Felix invites Paul back, as we'll see in the next verse, he will only do it at a more convenient time.

"Thou sayest, 'Another time.' How knowest thou that thou wilt ever feel again as thou feelest now? This morning, perhaps a voice is saying in thy heart, 'Prepare to meet thy God.' Tomorrow that voice will be hushed. The gaieties of the ball-room and the theatre will put out that voice that warns thee now, and perhaps thou wilt never hear it again. Men all have their warnings, and all men who perish have had a *last warning*. Perhaps this is your last warning. God to-day is pulling the reigns tight to check you from your lust; perhaps, if to-day you spurn the bit, and rush madly on, he will throw the reigns upon your back, saying, 'Let him alone;' and then it is a dark steeple-chase between hell and earth, and you will run it in mad confusion, never thinking of a hell till you find yourself past warning, past repentance, past faith, past hope." Charles Spurgeon

2 Corinthians 6:1-2 1 As God's fellow workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain. 2 For he says, "In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you." I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation. NIV

12. Be patient (Verses 26-27)

26 At the same time he was hoping that Paul would offer him a bribe, so he sent for him frequently and talked with him. 27 When two years had passed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus, but because Felix wanted to grant a favor to the Jews, he left Paul in prison.

- v26 Felix dismisses Paul with the hopes that he would offer him a bribe, which is why he sends for Paul frequently and talks with him.
- v27 Two years go by, and Felix is succeeded by Festus, however, Felix wants to show favor to the Jews, so he leaves Paul in prison.
- Here it becomes abundantly clear that Felix already had his mind made up and the only thing he wanted was a bribe because of greed.

"He longed for bribes, and therefore retained his innocent prisoner. Men will do anything for gain. This man felt the power of Paul's sermon, but loved the wages of sin too well to repent. If we also are saying, 'When I have a more convenient season I will call for thee,' is it not because we do not mean to give up our sins? And thus the apostle remained shut up for two whole years..."

Charles Spurgeon

- Two whole years isn't that a waste of precious time? No not so with God's eternal calendar. He's doing a work and it requires patience.
- The beloved Apostle Paul will wait patiently on the Lord. He knows his God is Judge of the Most High Court, and not Felix or Festus.